

Dear Friend,

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you with all joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3–5).

A special thanks to all who prayed and stood with us before and after the prayer meeting in Plymouth. Initial reports are of numbers that far exceeded our expectations. And why should that surprise us? The Scripture clearly tells us that our God is able to do for us beyond what we can ask or even think! We deeply appreciate you and are overjoyed that you continue with us in prayer. Much remains to be done. However, Jesus is more than able!

Which brings me to another thought. He is thinking special thoughts about you today. Thoughts about where He wants to take your life and what He alone is able to accomplish through you, for His glory! Are you willing to hear them? It's not about what you can do, but rather about what He is willing to do if you are simply willing to believe Him.

Open your heart to His voice today. There is something for you beyond anything you have thought of or asked for yet.

Have a God-inspired, supernatural day!

With you in Christ,
Pastor Carter Conlon

THE INCREDIBLE KINDNESS OF JESUS

by Carter Conlon

"All the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them'" (Luke 15:1–2). Picture the scene. There are those who know they are very distant from God, yet they feel comfortable in His presence. On the other hand, there are those who feel they are close to God but feel very uncomfortable in His presence. Isn't it interesting how that can happen?

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Jesus tells this story: *"A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living"* (Luke 15:11–13). This younger son took the life that his father had given him—the heritage, the title, the resources to accomplish what his life was supposed to be

—and went to a place that was far, far away from the heart of his father.

Just like this son, when people turn away from God, they often turn away from the purposes of God. In their hearts, they may not think they have turned from God, but they begin to gravitate to a self-focused gospel. Sadly, when the house of God has become legalistic and strict—where it all becomes about the length of clothing, church attendance, and doing your service for the house of God—another generation takes this inheritance of God and goes far away from His heart. They do not want to go to hell, but they do not want to be in a joyless religion. They want freedom, they want to dance in the house of God, they want to express their faith, but nobody will let them do anything. So they take their inheritance of life that is promised through Jesus, and they go to a place where it is all about their own future and happiness.

■ A FAMINE IN THE LAND

"But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land," (Luke 15:14). When you live for yourself, it is an exhausting life. And eventually, you hit a wall. Dreams do not materialize; nothing satisfies. The verse continues, *"and he began to be in want"* (15:14). Many Christians today

are fed up being where they are. They are tired of the addiction, tired of running from relationship to relationship, tired of the endless pursuit and going nowhere in life.

“He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine” (Luke 15:15). The last thing this young man should have been feeding was swine, for it was the most unclean thing to a child of God of that time. But he was in a field, feeding them or, in other words, allowing it to happen. This speaks to me of the kind of person who does not want to go back to what he left behind, so instead he becomes “cause driven.” A lot of young people today are cause driven, even if they are not sure what the cause is. They have a marginal understanding of what kind of society they are looking for. They are being driven by causes and slogans, and they begin feeding things that they should not be feeding—anger and division.

“And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything” (Luke 15:16). This young man must have felt that he did not matter to anybody. Have you noticed today that everything matters? Everybody is holding up a sign that says this matters, that matters. But not once have I seen a sign that said, “Christians matter.” I am somewhat thankful for that because God is causing the world to reject us as believers. He will not allow us to find satisfaction in a place where we should not be.

■ AN EPIPHANY

“But when he came to himself...” (Luke 15:17). In other words, the prodigal had an epiphany, which was simply this: “What am I doing here? I was created for something greater than this!” My prayer is that many who have strayed from God’s heart

will come to themselves and say, “I am not created to do these things. I am not created to give my life wholly to some cause that is short-lived.” It might even be a good cause, but it is short of what could be accomplished through their life. Remember, God can do something that is exceedingly above and beyond all that we can ask or think.

Perhaps you do not have a clear view of God, but God has a clear view of you.

“He said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants’” (Luke 15:17–19). And so he got up and tried to figure out what he was supposed to say in order to be received back. The statement that came out of his mouth was very telling, because to “sin against heaven” means that in his heart he was thinking, “I have lost my eternal reward.” Not only that, a sense of shame filled his heart as he concluded he was no longer worthy to be called his father’s son. In other words, “to come back to my father’s house means I will live in perpetual shame.”

Many people who have wandered away from the kingdom of God feel that way about themselves. “I would come back, but I have already blown it. I have lost the favor of God, and I am destined for a life of shame. Everyone else has a glorious victory story, but mine is such a disgrace that I am ashamed to open my mouth. So

I will just hang my head, take up my broom, and work to regain some of God’s favor.”

■ THE COMPASSION OF THE FATHER

“And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him” (Luke 15:20). He did not see his father, his father saw him. Perhaps you do not have a clear view of God, but God has a clear view of you. This verse continues, *“...his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him”* (Luke 15:20). Can you imagine what this boy felt like as he looked down the road and saw his father running toward him? At first, he was probably wondering if he was coming in anger. Maybe he was coming to yell, “Don’t come near my house! You are such a disgrace; get away from here!” How shocked he must have been when suddenly his father fell on his neck and kissed him!

If we find that we have strayed in any way from His heart, all He asks is that we get up and make our way back to Him.

Remember, the boy had been in a field with pigs. When his father embraced him, he took the smell of his son upon himself. In other words, he was saying, “I am not ashamed of you, son.” Likewise, when Jesus went to the cross and opened His arms wide with those nails through His hands and feet, He took the smell of our sins upon Himself—everything we have ever done, everything we are doing, everything we will ever do. If we find that we have strayed in any

way from His heart, all He asks is that we get up and make our way back to Him. He will always come running toward us, ready to embrace us.

In the kingdom of God, the Father covers anyone who comes to Him in the purest robe available—the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.

■ RESTORED TO ROYALTY

I do not think the boy knew how to deal with his father's reaction, because he started saying again, *"Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son"* (Luke 15:21). But the first thing his father said was, *"Bring out the best robe and put it on him"* (15:22). A robe is reserved for royalty, for an honored guest in the father's house. When that robe was put on the son, he was completely covered. He no longer looked like somebody who had just climbed out of a pigsty. And in the kingdom of God, the Father covers anyone who comes to Him in the purest robe available—the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Then the father said, *"Put a ring on his hand"* (Luke 15:22). This was a ring of authority that the father gave to those who were the most trusted in his house. Remember, the son thought, *"My father will never trust me*

again." Yet suddenly before he even had a chance to prove his worth, he was covered and trusted in the sight of his father. When the son put the seal of that ring on anything, it carried the weight and power of the father and his whole house behind it!

And then to top it all off, the father said, *"[Put] sandals on his feet"* (Luke 15:22). This is an interesting concept because usually in an encounter with God, such as the ones Moses and Joshua had, the command was, *"Take your shoes off of your feet"* (see Exodus 3:5, Joshua 5:15). In other words, God says to His people, *"I do not want your strength or your plans. I want you to walk humbly before Me and do what I tell you to do."*

He calls us to Himself so that He can cover our wrongdoing, empower us to live a new life, and send us out with a message for others.

But now you see the father has a son who has been broken, who knows what he is without his father. He understands grace. So now the father can say, *"Put his shoes on because he is not going to fight with me. He is not going to bring his own ideas into this kingdom. Now I can send him on a journey where he is going to be doing what he was destined to do. He is going to tell other people about the mercy and kindness of his father."*

And that is what our message is now. It is about God's invitation through His Son, Jesus Christ, for everyone to come home. It is no more difficult than that. Jesus paid the full price for our sins on the cross. He calls us to Himself so that He can cover our wrongdoing, empower us to live a new life, and send us out with a message for others: *"My life was a mess; I had ruined everything. But I came home, and my Father ran to me. He kissed me, covered me, filled me with power, and invited me to tell others about His incredible kindness. You must meet my Father!"*

Carter Conlon
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SUMMIT HOSTING TIMES SQUARE CHURCH WORLDWIDE PRAYER MEETING

During this season while Times Square Church is unable to have in-person gatherings, the Worldwide Prayer Meeting on Tuesday will be hosted at Summit!

Led by Pastor Carter Conlon, the first prayer meeting from Summit's Wilkerson Chapel was on October 20, 2020. Students gathered with anticipation, and the presence of the Lord was evident. Pastor Carter shared that God doesn't just want to take you out of where you are, but into what He wants for your life. The prayers for our nation and young people were powerful, and several students had the opportunity to stand and pray.

Having the privilege as a school to pray alongside people in over 200 countries around the world is an amazing experience. We are humbled and excited to become active participants in this pivotal prayer gathering on Tuesday nights during this time.

Join the prayer meeting hosted from Summit! Tuesdays at 7 PM on tsc.nyc.



CARTER CONLON

Carter Conlon is General Overseer of Times Square Church, Inc. He joined the pastoral staff as associate pastor in 1994 and was senior pastor from 2001 to 2020.

TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of "The Cross and the Switchblade." It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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CHURCH ONLINE

Sunday 10 AM

Tuesday 7 PM

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